



University College London  
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**Involving Communities in the Local Project Evaluation of New Deal for Communities:  
A Case of Collaborative Planning?**

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## Abstract

“Enhancing the power of communities” (DCLG, 2008: i) through community involvement has become a key policy goal of New Labour. Simultaneously, the requirement for evidence-based policy places an important role on the evaluation of regeneration programmes. These two areas of public policy are understood to be in tension with one another. While evaluation is founded in theories of modernism, community involvement is founded in theories that seek to move beyond modernism and towards pluralism. Collaborative planning is one such theory that seeks to move beyond modernism while also presenting a method for governance processes and “an ethical commitment to enabling all stakeholders to have a voice” (Healey, 2006: 5). The aim of this research project is to assess whether collaborative planning works as a theory in explaining instances of community involvement in evaluation processes. It focuses in particular on instances of community involvement processes in the local evaluation of projects run by New Deal for Communities (NDC) partnerships in London. Surveys and interviews are used to explore the approach to community involvement in evaluation by the staff of NDC partnerships who have responsibility for evaluation practices within their partnership. The research finds that evaluation procedures are fundamentally driven by funding streams, which in turn limit the extent to which community involvement, in a collaborative planning sense, can occur. This suggests that collaborative planning does not adequately describe instances of community involvement in evaluation due to its limited understanding of power. However, it is correct that processes cannot be seen as separate from outcomes, and thus that a code of ethics for community involvement in evaluation processes might be beneficial. Such a code should be built upon a better understanding of power if it is to work effectively.



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## 1. Introduction

“The path towards [social justices and environmental sustainability] is strewn with tension, contest and struggle... But this does not undermine the importance of [planning] endeavours in shaping what futures will emerge and what conditions will be like as we create and move through them” (Healey, 2006: 338)

Community Involvement is a key aspect of the Labour Government’s urban policy and strategy. So much so that, “in today’s prevailing climate of inclusiveness, you would be hard-pressed to find a regeneration scheme that does not involve some kind of community consultation” (Willis, 2008). The white paper *Communities in Control* (2008) is the most recent in a line of policies that seek to encourage community involvement. In this white paper the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, outlines the Government’s strategy for “enhancing the power of communities and helping people up and down the country to set and meet their own priorities... to get involved when they want to on their own terms” (2008: i). The New Deal for Communities (NDC) regeneration programme, launched by the government in 1998, is particular in that it puts community ownership as a central goal of the programme and thus can be seen as a pilot programme for putting communities in control.

Simultaneously, the “evidence-based approach to policy making” (Ho, 2003: 2) has been a significant aspect of policy making over successive recent Governments. This approach “focuses on assessing the impact of a policy” (ibid.: 14), and implies a particular set of evaluation practices and processes which can be understood as a “control mechanism” (ibid.: 209). Since the election of New Labour in 1997, urban-policy has largely followed this approach, while also recognising that evaluation should take “some account of community perspectives, reflecting New Labour’s wider drive to encourage policy makers to consult local communities at all stages of the policy process” (Wilks-Heeg, 2003: 211). This research examines the convergence of these two approaches to public-policy in the practice of community involvement in local project evaluation of NDC partnerships.

These two approaches to public-policy represent a ‘fundamental tension’ (Healey, 2006: 28) between modernism and schools of thought that seek to move beyond modernism, including post-modernism and neo-modernism (Allmendinger, 2002). Collaborative planning is one such school of thought that seeks to move planning theory and practice beyond the limits of modernism whilst simultaneously avoiding the problems of postmodernism (Healey, 2005: 307). It shifts from instrumental rationality to communicative rationality to enable “a *shared-power world*... [where] all stakeholders have a voice” (Healey, 2006: 5). The aim of this research project is to assess whether collaborative planning works as a theory in explaining instances of community involvement in evaluation processes.

Chapter two will provide a literature review of community involvement, evaluation of regeneration projects and collaborative planning. Chapter three will give a brief overview of the NDC to contextualise the methodology. Chapter four will outline the aims and objectives and how these will be fulfilled by the research methodology, the rationale for the research methods and cases selected. This will be followed by analysis of the findings in chapter five, and finally by conclusions and recommendations in chapter six. The research draws attention not only to the limitations of community involvement in evaluation processes in practice, but also to the limitations of collaborative planning. Neither of these points means that community involvement in the evaluation process is neither desirable nor achievable, but rather highlights the problems encountered in such exercises.

## 2. Literature Review

This chapter provides a theoretical overview and background to the research. It presents the evidence-based approach to policy-making and the increasing emphasis on community involvement<sup>1</sup> in public-policy and then examines the tensions between the two as conceived by collaborative planning. Following this, two critiques of collaborative planning will be outlined, namely those relating to both individual and structural power, and outcomes.

### 2.1. Evidence-based policy making and Evaluation

The “evidence-based approach to policy making” (Ho, 2003: 2) taken by the current Labour government places an emphasis on the importance of monitoring and evaluation<sup>2</sup>. While there are several reasons for carrying out evaluation, the evidence-based approach sees “the primary purpose of evaluation [as] to assess the degree to which policy, programme and project objectives are being secured, and how effectively, efficiently and economically they are being achieved” (Moore & Spires, 2000: 216). Central to this approach “the value for money ideology... [which has] taken root in the public services” (Ho, 2003: 206). The approach is founded on instrumental rationality whereby “impartial reason could be used as the measure of just actions” (Healey, 2006: 9). An implicit distinction is made between means and ends, whereby the means, that is, evaluation processes, are assumed to provide objective information upon which to base decision-making as an ends.

The evidence-based approach supported by the government has “generated a body of technique and evaluation criteria now used extensively by government agencies” (Healey, 2006: 28). Suet Ying Ho (2003) notes, “since the Conservative Party entered

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Community’ includes individuals, organisations and businesses (Hague et al, 2003: 6). ‘Community involvement’ focuses on actual instances of involvement, whereas engagement, influence and empowerment focus upon the relationship between the actors involved. It is important here to note that community involvement may not necessarily imply empowerment (see Duffy et al, 2008: 8 and NRU, 2004: 9)

<sup>2</sup> Monitoring is “the collection of regular information on performance against objectives, after a policy has been introduced” (HM Treasury, 1995: 2), while evaluation entails a critical assessment of the information collected in monitoring (DETR, 2000: 6). The focus of this research project is on evaluation specifically.

government in 1979, the number of evaluation studies of urban regeneration initiatives had risen dramatically” (p1). This government-led or top-down approach seeks to build evidence-based evaluation practices into the delivery of regeneration programmes.

## 2.2. The Policy Context of Community Involvement

Simultaneous to the increasing focus on evidence-based policy making, there has been an increasing emphasis on the importance of involving communities in regeneration processes. This partly results from the publication of the Robson Report of 1994, commissioned by the Department of the Environment to evaluate the overall impact of urban policy in England. The report argued that urban policy of the 1980s and 90s did not adequately account for the needs of residents, and also missed the opportunity to “utilise [residents’] skills and to mobilise their support” (Robson, 1994: xiv); local communities “need to be given opportunities to play roles in coalitions [of actors]” (ibid.: xiv).

Subsequently, New Labour launched a succession of plans, policies and strategies to encourage community involvement. In 2001 the Social Exclusion Unit published a ten-year national strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal outlining the government’s approach to neighbourhood renewal and emphasising the importance of community involvement in regeneration. This strategy pressed for communities to be actively involved in the “design and delivery, and where possible in the driving seat” (SEU, 2001: 19) of regeneration. Community involvement was further entrenched by the *Sustainable Communities Plan*, launched by the Deputy Prime Minister in 2003, which states “effective engagement and participation by local people, groups and businesses” (p5) as a key requirement of sustainable communities. Most recently, the White Paper *Communities in Control* (2008) sets out the Government’s policies with regard to encouraging more active citizenship and public engagement with service providers and local authorities. Evident in this expanding raft of policies, plans and strategies is an approach to community involvement that promotes ‘frontloading’, local knowledge as a complement to ‘expert knowledge’, participatory democracy, and community empowerment.

## 2.3. Community Involvement in Evaluation: Research and practice so far

There is growing recognition of the potential for involving communities in the evaluation process as a way of overcoming some of the problems identified with evaluation processes and to increase practices of community involvement; “it is widely accepted that evaluation is a social process which implies the need for a participatory approach” (Gregory, 2000: 179). Ho (2003) argues that the current focus of value for money and the top-down nature of evaluation “provides limited value to learning lessons” (p209), and also creates a negative perception of evaluation which, in turn, impacts upon the quality of information collected (p94). While the election of New Labour in 1997 saw a continuation of the evidence-based approach to policy-making, there was in addition, recognition that evaluation should take “some account of community perspectives, reflecting New Labour’s wider drive to encourage policy makers to consult local communities at all stages of the policy process” (Wilks-Heeg, 2003: 211). Furthermore, *Involving Communities in Urban and Rural Regeneration* (1997), a guidance note published by the Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) for regeneration practitioners stated that “the community, as users or beneficiaries, are important to the whole task of monitoring and evaluation” (p60). However, there is little to suggest how this should work in practice, which arguably “represents a significant Achilles heel for contemporary urban policy” (Wilks-Heeg, 2003: 206).

Apart from government policy, a number of models for community involvement in evaluation exist. David Fetterman’s (1994) *Empowerment Evaluation*, which takes an explicitly political approach to evaluation as a form of empowering people (p11), is seen as a fundamental influence on later community evaluation models. Lynn Dobbs and Craig Moore’s (2002) analysis of the impacts of the inclusion of community members in formative<sup>3</sup> evaluation is one of few academic works to critically assess the involvement of communities in evaluation of regeneration programmes. Their starting point is “that local people’s involvement in the process of identifying and researching community needs and aspirations offers the potential to generate

meaningful data while also facilitating a subsequent increase in community capacity and capital” (p157). They argue that the community evaluation approach used in Tyneside impacted both the effectiveness of evaluation, and lead to “an obvious leveling of power between community representatives and other previously dominant stakeholders” (ibid: 168) through “careful planning and the use of frameworks which encourage empowerment... [and] the right to participate” (ibid: 170).

This research contributes to a growing field of research into practices of community involvement in evaluation processes by examining the evaluation practices of NDC. It explores the potential to reformulate evaluation as a reflective and discursive process for learning rather than as a ‘control mechanism’. It does so using collaborative planning as a particular school of thought in planning theory and practice.

#### 2.4. Collaborative Planning

Patsy Healey’s *Collaborative Planning* (2006) would see modernist evidence-based policy-making and community involvement policies as fundamentally in tension with one another (p28). Evidence-based policy-making represents a “reassertion of market liberal notions of governance” (ibid.), which are founded in instrumental rationality and positivism. Positivism has had a strong influence “on the theory and practice of policy evaluation, particularly during the formative years of the 1980s” (Wilks-Heeg, 2003: 216). Healey’s critique of instrumental rationality and market-liberalism challenge the Government’s approach to evaluation in relation specifically to objectivity, power, and knowledge. The following section will deal with these in turn.

Positivism, a key element of modernism, argues that objectivity is possible due to the existence of “social facts... [which have] an independent existence outside the individual consciousnesses” (Durkheim, 1994: 440), and thus can be determined by impartial analysis. This understanding is evident in the Government’s approach, which sees the use of indicators and performance criteria as transparent and “the

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<sup>3</sup> Ho (2003) makes the distinction between formative and summative evaluation, the former “conducted during planning and design” (p14), the latter “refers to the evaluation of the overall results of a policy,



desirability for the evaluation task to be seen as reasonably objective” (Moore & Spires, 2000: 203). However, Healey (2006) argues that this “converts citizen’s interests into technical criteria” (p239) and so fails to take account of local contexts and different values. Positivism also assumes that means, or formal decision-making procedures (Allmendinger, 2002: 194) such as value for money, are neutral, and that it is only ends that require value judgements (Fay, 1975:50). However, the impartiality of indicators and evaluation processes is seriously challenged by social constructivist theories, which argue that all knowledge is socially situated, and therefore that objectivity is impossible. Evaluation processes becomes “inextricably bound up with wider ideologies of urban policy intervention” (Wilks-Heeg, 2003: 205).

Accepting that evaluation is bound to particular policy and ideologies requires a critical understanding of the power relations of evaluation processes. Healey (2006) argues, while the Government’s approach to evaluation “assume[s] that the criteria, and how they should be measured, are easy to define and to be agreed upon... In practice, indicators and measurements are all potentially contestable. This approach thus does not necessarily reduce the quantum of conflict” (p. 33). Social and structural power relations between, for instance, the information provider and receiver, and between departments and organisations (Ho, 2003: 94) become important in shaping the evaluation process. By excluding all stakeholders from the formulation of evaluation processes, governments operate control mechanisms by “draw[ing] people into the implementation of policy, not its formulation” (Healey, 2006: 234).

Finally, evaluation processes cannot be value-free, but rather are representative of those commissioning the evaluation. So the ‘criteria based’ approach “represents a very narrow... construction of people’s interests and how they behave” (ibid.: 234). Similarly, Lynne Dobbs and Craig Moore argue that the “researcher-led approaches are often inaccurate and can lead to inappropriate responses” (Dobbs & Moore, 2002: 159). Several authors have proposed ways in which evaluation can become more representative and reflective of the “social, interactive processes” (Healey, 2006: 29) that constitute knowledge and values. There is an increasing awareness that “local

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usually towards the end or after the completion of a policy” (ibid.)

people have the greatest wealth of subjective knowledge of their own experiences” (Watt et al., 2000: 122).

The second approach to public-policy is the policy analysis tradition. It is from this approach that Healey develops *Collaborative Planning* as both a method for governance processes and “an ethical commitment to enabling all stakeholders to have a voice” (Healey, 2006: 5). Collaborative planning is based upon sociological institutionalist theory and influenced by the social theorists Jürgen Habermas and Anthony Giddens. It combines new institutionalism and communicative rationality to reconcile the many different interests in a pluralist society (ibid.: 34). It recognises that our values are socially constructed, but rather than being predetermined, Healey (2003) argues that “people are inventive and creative... there is always some scope for innovation” (p105). So, while power exists in structures and social relations, “we have choices about what to accept of our structured, social embeddedness” (Healey, 2006: 57). The challenge then is to “incorporate greater understanding of how people come to have the ways of thinking and ways of valuing what they do, and how policy development can be made more interactive” (ibid.: 28). This is to be achieved through transforming governance processes into “critical, dialogic and discursive forms [where] deliberative democracy can flourish” (ibid.: 317).

Redesigning institutions is fundamental to bringing about this change. Institutions are understood as “the norms of behaviour and routines of practices embedded in particular histories and geographies” (ibid.: 326) and can be either formalised in rules and structures or exist informally in norms and practices (ibid.: 59). Importantly, institutions vary in their capacity for transformation depending on the “overall quality of the collection of relational networks in a place” (ibid.: 61). According to Healey, good institutional capacities “are those which generate the transformative power to imagine and adapt creatively to new situations” (ibid.: 328) and “can build consensus not only around what the problems are, but about strategies and directions” (ibid.: 244). While not prescribing specific institutional forms, collaborative planning describes a range of characteristics that describe how collaborative processes might work (see Figure 1)

Figure 1: Characteristics of Collaborative Planning

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Encouraging interaction and discussion</li><li>b) Developing reflective capacity</li><li>c) Community Ownership of the regeneration process</li><li>d) Fostering Diversity</li><li>e) Encouraging Inclusivity</li><li>f) Consensus building</li><li>g) Formal involvement</li><li>h) Informal involvement</li><li>i) Strategic approach to community involvement</li></ul>
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This research project will use Healey's collaborative planning as "an approach to understanding and evaluating governance processes" (Healey, 2003: 107), focusing in particular on community involvement in evaluation processes undertaken by the staff of NDC partnerships. Collaborative planning does not directly focus on community involvement in evaluation processes, but rather more generally on how "communities... work out collaboratively how to give validity and priority to different claims in order to work out what action, if any, to take in a particular contested situation" (p.52). Nevertheless, the approach provides a useful evaluative framework for evaluation processes.

## 2.5. Critiques of Collaborative Planning

Healey's collaborative planning has itself been subject to critique. The two critiques that I will focus on are that power, both individual and structural, challenges Healey's emphasis on institutionalism and that the emphasis on process fails to recognise that way in which outcomes shape processes.

The first critique follows the argument that "changing the institutional framework of governance" (Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger, 1998: 1980) is not sufficient for a more "open discursive style of governance to develop" (ibid.) as institutional structures are not the only factor that impact upon political spaces. There are several ways in which individuals' values and behaviours, operating within collaborative institutions, may limit the extent to which collaborative processes can be achieved. Firstly, people may

hold a variety of values that may negate a commitment to collaborative working. Indeed, it is entirely possible that some may value instrumental rationality (ibid.:1979). Given that individuals may hold different perceptions and opinions, they may “deliberately obfuscate the facts and judgements for their own benefit and for the benefit of their own arguments” (ibid.:1982). This is in recognition that, far from “deciding morally” (ibid.:1981) and “acting openly and honestly... individuals are far more ‘behaviourist’” (ibid.:1986) and may act strategically. Additionally, individuals may understand community involvement in different ways. The distinction between understanding community involvement as a means or as an end (see Parfitt, 2004, Imrie & Raco, 2003, and Arnstein, 1969) may impact on the form and style of communication advanced by individuals and their perceptions of community.

Healey has also been criticised for reducing the importance of structural power. While she does acknowledge the existence of structural power, she is over-optimistic about the degree to which structural power impinges upon individual action (Rydin, 2003: 35). In particular, it is argued that “collaborative planning often understates the pervasive influence of globalisation” (Brand & Gaffikin, 2007: 289), and fails to understand the impacts of globalisation and neo-liberalism upon local governance processes. Indeed, Healey has been criticised for supporting such processes (Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger, in Brand & Gaffikin, 2007: 289), as she argues that “a major function of local governance is to help firms overcome hurdles and market barriers” (Healey, 2006: 160). The implications of neo-liberalism upon local governance is argued to be far less sanguine as there is the “structural trend for the neo-liberal project to move urban governance away from democratic decision-making” (Purcell, 2006: 1923). This is significant in terms of evidence-based policy-making given that evaluation processes are tied into control strategies operated by central government “through the way it allocate[s] (through competitive funding regimes) and then monitored the use of resources” (Tiesdall & Allmendinger, 2001: 907).

The second critique is that the emphasis on process undermines the importance of outcome to decision-making processes. By focusing on the process of decision-making, there is little focus on how collaborative discourses can be transposed into

outcomes (Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendigner, 1998: 1983). Without a way of ensuring that outcomes will be achieved, the usefulness of collaborative processes is significantly reduced.

In response to these critiques Healey argues that power is central to collaborative planning, as “all social relations have a power dimension” (Healey, 2003: 113), and that it is important to “look carefully at the power relations of argumentative processes as well as the consequences of the outcomes of these processes” (ibid.: 114). For Healey, power is a “relation not a ‘thing’” (ibid.: 113). It is this understanding of power that leads Healey to emphasise the importance of process. For Healey outcomes are “constructed through relations of knowledge and power” (ibid.: 110), and therefore, the process through which these outcomes are produced are important. Further to this, Healey claims;

“process should not be understood merely as a means to a substantive end. Processes have process outcomes. Engagement in governance processes shapes participants’ sense of themselves [and] generates ways of thinking and acting... For the actors involved, it means that they are faced with decisions (explicit or implicit) about an ethics of conduct as well as an ethics of material outcome” (ibid.: 111).

Whilst it is important to recognise that processes have outcomes, both substantive and procedural, the critique still stands that not everyone will value this process or choose to act ‘morally’ or ‘ethically’ in such situations, and that structural power may have a greater impact than is assumed by Healey.

This research will explore the extent to which these critiques apply through exploring the experiences of staff of NDC partnerships in carrying out community involvement in evaluation processes. The following section will provide a brief overview of the NDC programme.

### 3. The New Deal for Communities

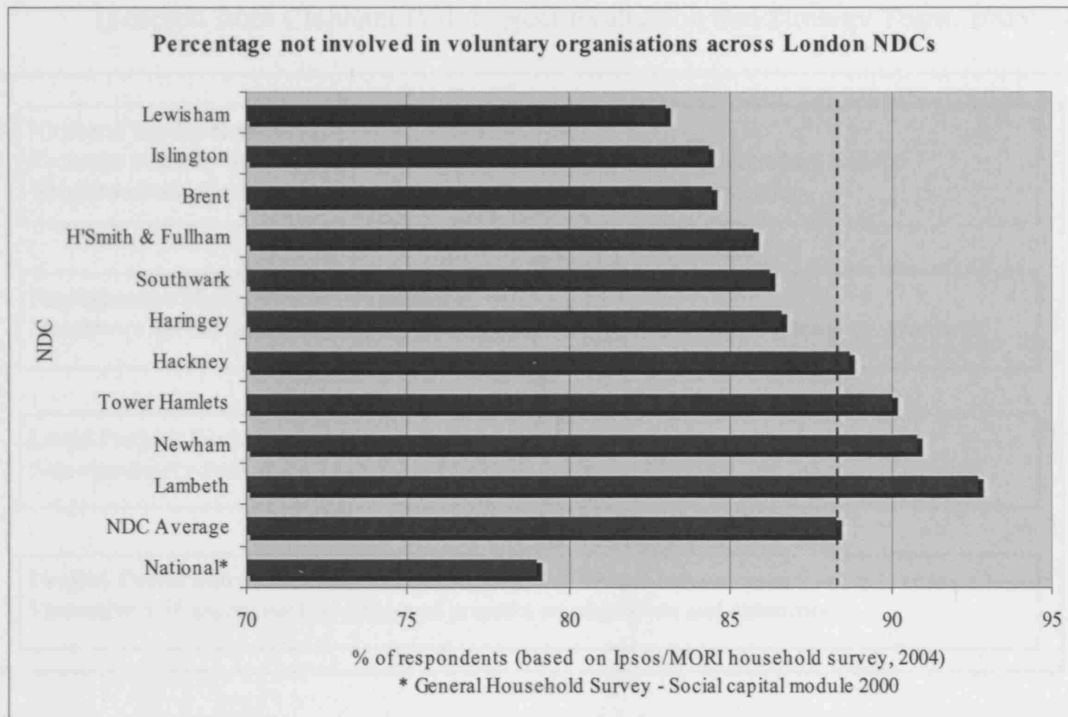
The New Deal for Communities (NDC) is one of the central regeneration programmes of New Labour. It pilots a particular approach to area-based regeneration that is community led. As such it presents a possible example of institutional design following the collaborative planning approach. The NDC has also been subject to rigorous evaluation. It thus provides an interesting case of a convergence of the market-liberal and policy analysis approaches to public-policy.

Launched in 1998 the NDC targeted thirty-nine deprived neighbourhoods of around 10,000 people across England for a period of ten years. It promotes a 'joined-up' approach to tackling a range of themes including employment, crime, education, health, and the environment. The programme claims to work on the basis that "the problems of each NDC neighbourhood are unique" (NRU, 2008), and that solutions to these problems should be determined locally.

#### 3.1. Community Involvement in the practice of NDCs

A common aspect across all NDC partnerships is the emphasis on community involvement in the regeneration process; "NDC partnerships and programmes are being driven by their communities" (NRU, 2001: 11 in Grimsley, 2005: 2). Community involvement is formalised through the governance structure of NDCs by ensuring that the majority of board members are residents of the NDC area. Recognizing that levels of community involvement in NDC areas are lower than the national average (Grimsley, 2005: i), NDC partnerships also deliver a range of community development projects which seek to build community capacity and involvement.

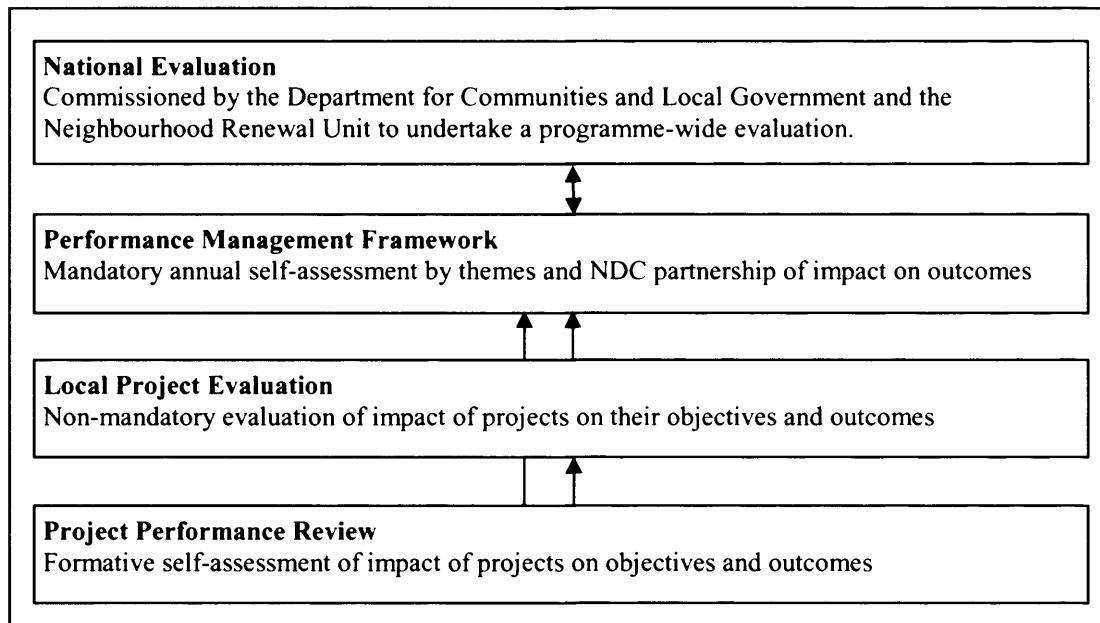
Figure 2: Percentage of residents not involved in voluntary organisations across London NDCs (Adapted from Grimsley et al. 2005)



### 3.2. The Evaluation framework of NDCs

There are several tiers to the evaluation of the NDC. Figure 3 illustrates the various aspects of the evaluation. While this research focuses particularly on local project evaluation, it is a contention that the overall 'top-down' evaluation framework impacts upon the way in which local project evaluations through the relationships and methodologies applied. In the early years of NDC partnerships, "evaluation seemed to be relatively underdeveloped with 66% of partnerships having carried out little or no evaluation and only 8% with systematic and well resourced evaluation" (CRESR, 2002: 31). However, there is evidence to suggest that evaluation activities, including planning, staffing, and local project evaluation, have increased over time (Lawless et al, 2007b).

Figure 3: The evaluation framework for NDCs  
(adapted from Clapham Park Project Evaluation and Strategy Team, 2005: 10)



While local project evaluation is not a mandatory requirement, the NRU offers guidance to NDC partnerships for carrying out these evaluations. This guidance is outlined in two key documents: *New Deal for Communities: Monitoring, Review and Evaluation* (DETR, 2000) and *A Framework for Evaluations of Regeneration Projects and Programmes* (HM Treasury, 1995). Both documents give guidance about the rationale for undertaking evaluation and the criteria to be evaluated. However, they differ slightly in their approach. While the former states that project evaluation should examine relevance, feasibility and sustainability (DETR, 2000: 13), the latter “provides a technical framework for measuring value for money and improving comparability” (HM Treasury, 1995: 2) where “all the costs and all the benefits of each activity or programme would be expressed in monetary terms” (ibid: 6). This is suggestive of a shift in the approach to evaluation taken by central government over the period between the publication of the two documents. However, the DETR makes specific reference to the HM Treasury document as “current guidance” (DETR, 2000: 14) suggesting that this remains the fundamental approach.



## 4. Methodology

Chapters two and three have outlined the literature on community involvement and evaluation, collaborative planning, and the NDC. This chapter will provide a summary of the research framework used to carry out the aims and objectives of this research project.

### 4.1. Aims and Objectives

The aim of this research project is to assess whether collaborative planning works as a theory in explaining instances of community involvement in evaluation processes.

The objectives are:

- to determine the approach taken by NDC partnerships to community involvement in local project evaluation, using collaborative planning as “an approach to understanding and evaluating” (Healey, 2003: 107) such processes; and
- to examine the key drivers and barriers to community involvement in local project evaluation in order to assess the viability of collaborative planning as a methodology and theoretical framework.

### 4.2. Hypothesis

The hypothesis is that community involvement in local project evaluation cannot be described as an instance of collaborative planning. This is because both individual and structural power act as barriers to community involvement, thus revealing the limitations of the institutionalist theory taken by collaborative planning.

### 4.3. Primary Research

Primary research was carried out in two phases. The first phase involved administering a survey to all NDC partnerships in London, while the second phase

involved interviews with three NDC partnerships selected from the survey respondents.

#### 4.3.1. The Survey

The aim of the survey was to scope the approach to local project evaluation and community involvement taken by all NDC partnerships in London, firstly, to gain an overview of practices in London and, secondly, to allow informed selection of three NDC partnerships for further in-depth research through interviews. A copy of the survey is presented in Appendix A.

The survey questions were drawn up in relation to the specific research objectives of the research project. Taking each objective in turn:

- to determine the approach taken by NDC partnerships to community involvement in local project evaluation against the collaborative planning approach: Questions one to three aim to establish the approach that staff have with regard to the importance and reasoning for evaluation. Questions four and five focus specifically on approaches to community involvement in the evaluation process. Question six and seven were drawn up using a “template approach” (Robson, 2002: 458) whereby codes were derived from the collaborative planning approach (see Figure 1). This was to explore whether the characteristics of collaborative planning describe the approach taken to community involvement in general and to project evaluation specifically.
- to examine who or what are the key drivers and barriers to community involvement in local project evaluation is examined through questions eight to eleven.

The survey includes a range of both open and closed questions. While closed questions are particularly useful for cross-comparison, open questions allow “respondents [to] answer in their own terms... they allow unusual responses to be derived... [and] are useful for exploring new areas or ones in which the researcher has limited knowledge” (Bryman, 2004: 145). As such, open questions contributed to the

development of more focused questions for the interviews. A cover sheet explaining the aim of the survey, assuring confidentiality, and encouraging responses was included (Robson, 2002: 250).

The survey was piloted on two NDC partnerships outside of London to ensure that questions were clear and concise. The pilot survey highlighted “the problem of meaning” (Bryman, 2004: 128), with the terms ‘community’ and ‘community involvement’. To overcome this problem, definitions were provided on the cover sheet to the survey.

The survey was administered to staff with responsibility for evaluation and monitoring tasks, as they were perceived to have most knowledge about instances of community involvement in evaluation. Staff members were initially contacted by email to ask if they would be prepared to take part in the research. Subsequently, the survey was sent via email, which was the most time- and cost-effective method, and also most convenient for respondents (ibid.: 134). To increase response rates a follow-up email was sent a week later, and a final phone call a week after that (ibid.: 137).

Fifteen surveys were sent out to all London NDCs. A total of ten responses were received, from eight of the ten NDCs, giving a response rate of 66%. A summary of responses is presented in section 5.1., and the full responses are available in Appendix C.

Results were entered into a spreadsheet to improve analysis and presentation. Open questions were post-coded into relevant categories (ibid.: 146) to help analyse and organise data for exploratory and confirmatory analysis (Robson, 2002: 394). Analysis of the surveys revealed three categories of respondents: (1) community involvement in evaluation perceived as very important, with a range of opportunities for involvement; (2) community involvement in evaluation perceived as quite important, with some opportunity for involvement; and, (3) community involvement in evaluation perceived as unimportant with very little opportunity for involvement.

#### 4.3.2. The Interviews

Following from the surveys, staff from one of each three categories was contacted to arrange a follow-up interview. The interviews were semi-structured, with the survey acting as springboard. This allowed for in depth exploration of the responses given in the survey. The questions asked in the interview were generally very open as the aim was to allow “respondents to answer in their own terms” (Bryman, 2004: 145). A copy of the interview schedule is presented in Appendix B. Interviews were recorded using a dictaphone and then transcribed and analysed.

#### 4.4. Secondary research

Secondary research was carried out over two main areas. Analysis of theoretical texts and relevant research papers are covered in the literature review. Additionally, various documents published by NDC partnerships - including guidance for carrying out evaluations, examples of evaluation reports, and strategies relating to community involvement and evaluation – contributed to the analysis of survey and interview responses.

#### 4.5. Limitations

There are several limitations to the research methods and to the research project. Due to time and space requirements, the research only focuses on NDC partnerships in London. The research is limited in terms of its focus on NDC staff and thus does not investigate the perspectives of other participants involved in evaluation processes. The research also only examines the perspectives of staff involved with particular responsibility for evaluation. This may explain to some degree the fact that none of the survey respondents indicated that community involvement was *more* important than evaluation. As such, similar research carried out on staff with responsibility specifically for community involvement may elucidate different findings.

While the surveys do produce quantitative data, both surveys and interviews seek the perceptions of staff and are thus subject to interpretation both on the part of the



## 5. Results and Analysis

The primary focus of this chapter is the analyses of three interviews undertaken with respondents to the survey. However, a brief presentation of the responses from the survey will be made.

### 5.1. The Survey

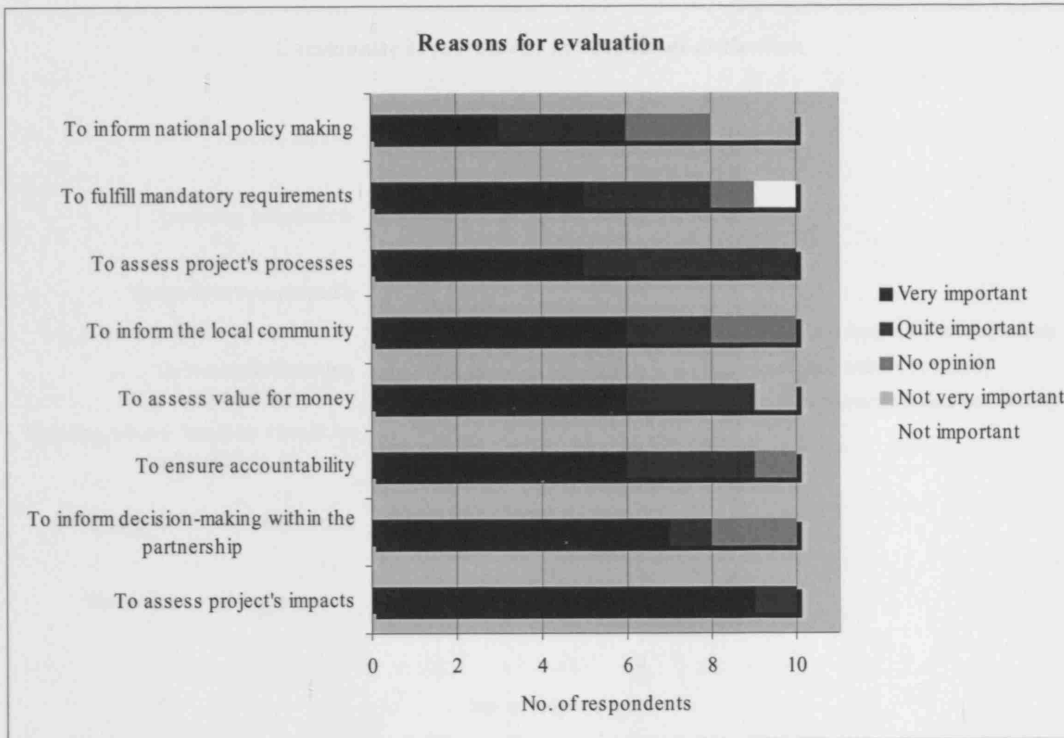
The survey was administered to staff with a responsibility for evaluation processes of their particular NDC. Responses can be viewed in full in Appendix C

#### 5.1.1. Approaches to community involvement in local project evaluation

In general, project evaluation was important to the work of NDCs. All respondents perceived it as either very important (8/10) or quite important (2/10). Respondents were asked about what they perceived to be the reasons for undertaking evaluation. The largest proportion of respondents considered evaluation for the purpose of assessing the project's impacts to be most important, while assessing value for money and accountability were also seen as relatively important. The most frequently mentioned 'other' reason related to improving sustainability in terms of future project delivery, strategy, and funding.

Respondents were also asked about the importance of community involvement in local project evaluation. While the majority of respondents indicated that both project evaluation and community involvement in project evaluation were very important (7/10), three respondents indicated that the latter was relatively less important than the former.

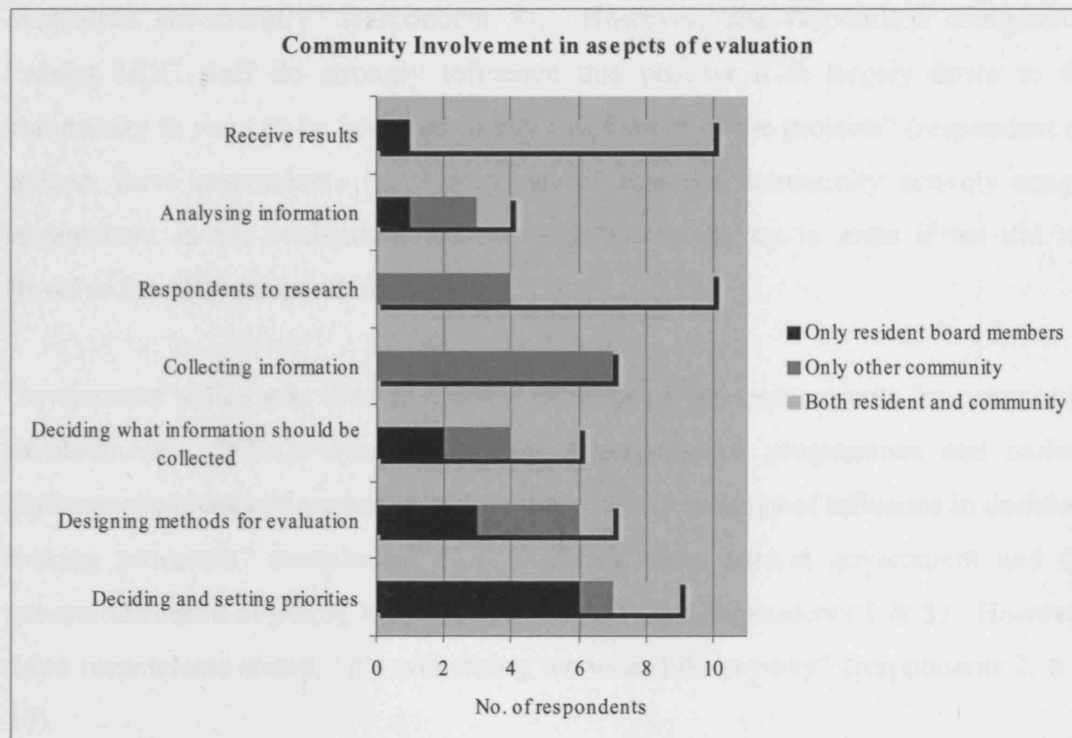
Figure 4: Reasons for Evaluation



Respondents were asked to explain the reasons to the question of how important community involvement in evaluation processes is. A range of views were received suggesting a number of different understandings and values of community involvement. These views ranged from: community involvement as a way of improving the quality of evaluation; as improving accountability; and as a capacity building or empowerment exercise.

All respondents stated that there was some form of community involvement in the evaluation process. The aspects of evaluation with the most frequent responses are 'responding to research' and 'receiving results', suggesting that the community take quite a passive role in the evaluation process. However, 'deciding and setting priorities' received the third highest amount of responses, and the most responses in terms of involvement of resident board members, indicating a degree of 'frontloading'. While not all NDCs involve the community in all aspects of the evaluation process, there are instances where community involvement occurs across all aspects of the evaluation process: "Community members... are key to each stage in the project life cycle. This extends to evaluation" (Respondent 5).

Figure 5: Community involvement in aspects of evaluation



Generally, respondents indicated that practices of community involvement in project evaluation corresponded with the specific characteristics of collaborative planning outlined in section 2.4.. This is particularly the case for encouraging interaction and discussion, consensus building, and formal and informal involvement. However the range of responses to community ownership of the evaluation process, and encouraging inclusivity were most wide, with one respondent indicating that this aspect of evaluation work was very weak. Also six of the ten respondents indicated that developing a reflective capacity was either ‘very strong’ or ‘quite strong’, resulting in this category as having the least amount of responses for these values.

#### 5.1.2. Perceived Drivers and Barriers to Community Involvement in Evaluation

The most frequently perceived drivers to community involvement in the project evaluation were NDC staff and the community. The expertise of staff in the field of community development and evaluation was seen as a very important component: “the knowledge of the staff acts as the primary driver” (respondent 10, also respondent 1 & 5). Knowledge and expertise was argued to be fundamental for staff



to be able to “support community to learn how to evaluate and participate in evaluation successfully” (respondent 8). However, one respondent commented, “whilst NDC staff do strongly influence this process it is largely down to the community to want to be involved in any assessment of the projects” (respondent 6). Indeed, three respondents (1, 2 & 5) stated that the community actively sought engagement in the evaluation process, and “would be up in arms if we did not [involve them]!!” (respondent 2).

Government policy was seen as a driver in terms of the requirements for community involvement: “NDCs were set up as community-led programmes and include performance measures around local involvement and feelings of influence in decision-making processes” (respondent 5). Guidance from central government and the general influence of policy were also seen as drivers (respondents 1 & 5). However, three respondents stated, “it’s something we would do anyway” (respondents 2, 6 & 10).

With regard to barriers, three respondents indicated institutional barriers were a problem. When asked to elaborate on what constituted an institutional barrier, respondent 10 stated that institutions refer “to the wider political infrastructure that exists beyond the NDC... mainstream organisations who do not often engage with communities effectively... Therefore, our engagement is often about undoing past wrongs and regaining trust”. Only one respondent indicated that staff willingness to undertake community involvement in the evaluation process was a barrier; “we have never done it before, and so it is easier to not start” (respondent 7). Four respondents (5, 6, 8 & 10) stated that one of the most significant barriers faced within the organisation was the lack of resources, in terms of staff time, money, and skills.

Some respondents stated that the community was seen as one of the major barriers to community involvement in the evaluation process. One respondent claimed that “the community is not interested in doing evaluation” (respondent 7). This was reflected in statements by two other respondents who suggested that *some* members of the community may not be particularly interested by evaluation specifically (respondents 3 & 6). Another barrier associated with the community related to the socio-economic

and educational characteristics of the community. “Strong localised inequalities” (respondent 9) and a perceived “lack of confidence among BAME with English as second language, and English with literacy problems” (respondent 2) were stated as factors creating barriers to involvement.

The key barriers and drivers then are the staff and community, while government is perceived to play a secondary and/or supportive role. Staff must be well resourced - in terms of time, money and skills - to be able to carry out effective community involvement. Demand from the community is a key driver for more community involvement. On the other hand, a perceived lack of demand from the community is an important barrier, but one that may be overcome by staff and resources.

Analysis of the surveys revealed three categories of respondents: (1) community involvement in evaluation perceived as very important, with a range of opportunities for involvement; (2) community involvement in evaluation perceived as quite important, with some opportunity for involvement; and, (3) community involvement in evaluation perceived as unimportant with very little opportunity for involvement.

	<b>Respondent A (Category 1)</b>	<b>Respondent B (Category 2)</b>	<b>Respondent C (Category 3)</b>
Importance of evaluation to NDC	Very important	Very important	Quite important
Importance of community involvement in evaluation	Very important Several opportunities for involvement	Quite important. Some opportunities for involvement	Quite unimportant Few opportunities for involvement
Approach to local project evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence-based</li> <li>• Mandatory – evaluations always carried out</li> <li>• Elements of top-down and bottom-up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence-based</li> <li>• Not Mandatory – evaluations often carried out</li> <li>• Top-down</li> <li>• Objectivity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence-based</li> <li>• Not Mandatory – evaluations rarely carried out</li> </ul>
Approach to community involvement in local project evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community involved in several aspects of evaluation</li> <li>• Community trained as experts</li> <li>• Training important to ensure organisations have capacity for evaluation in order to gain funding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community respond to research and given information</li> <li>• Evaluations to ‘prove’ the value of partnership working within community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community respond to research</li> </ul>
Drivers and Barriers to community involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong capacity and commitment of staff</li> <li>• Government agenda supports approach</li> <li>• ‘Realistic’ about limitations of community involvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local politics seen as barrier to objectivity</li> <li>• Government sets framework for evaluation</li> <li>• Staff commitment to evaluation processes is weak</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perception that community do not want to be involved</li> <li>• Government have little influence</li> <li>• Lack of resources and capacity</li> </ul>
Perceived outcomes of evaluation processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased quality of information</li> <li>• Increased capacity of community in relation to carrying out evaluation work to increase potential for funding and economic sustainability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased evidence of the benefit of partnership working amongst local voluntary and community organisations and agencies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance qualitative data for evidence base</li> </ul>

Figure 6: Interviewee perceptions of community involvement in evaluation processes

## 5.2. The interviews

While the previous section outlined the approach across eight of the ten NDC partnerships in London, this section focuses in more depth on the practices of three NDCs in particular. The interviewees were selected according to the three categories above. All quotations are the respondents' apart from where indicated otherwise.

### 5.2.1. Respondent A

Respondent A was categorised as having a strong approach to community involvement in local project evaluation. Evaluation is perceived as 'very important' to the work of the NDC, and, while project evaluation was not made mandatory by central government, it is mandatory within this particular NDC. A thorough evaluation framework is in place that shapes and supports project evaluation from project approval through to scrutiny and feedback of evaluations by the Board. For each project evaluation a steering group is established - comprising of the respondent, another NDC staff member, a Board member, a delivery agent and beneficiaries – with the responsibility to “shape the brief for the evaluation, and manage it... throughout the process”. This framework reflects the value and rigour given to an evidence-based approach to programme delivery. Significantly, local knowledge is perceived to be an important contribution to the evidence base, and community involvement in evaluation processes is necessary to gathering this information; “local knowledge and expertise [of] local residents... made the evaluations more effective in terms of really understanding the process of change”.

Over the lifetime of the NDC various approaches to community involvement in evaluation have been used including citizens' juries, community-led appraisal panels and community researchers. This range of methods displays the 'innovative' approach taken, “because we're conscious that that's one of our other reasons we're set up – to test innovative approaches; and we've taken that to include evaluation as well”. The choice of methodology for evaluation depends upon the desired outcome of the evaluation:

“At the beginning you've got a lot of... creativity around the project design and approval processes. You're interested in building

capacity... Now, we're really focusing on reorganising our resources for the last phase of the programme, and we've just done this huge project where we've been looking at everything in rapid assessment and rapid evaluation... So there's a... narrowing of the innovation and flexibility that you allow into the evaluation process because what you want out of it at the end"

So, it is not always the case that there is community involvement in all aspects of the evaluation process. Indeed, some of the methods for community involvement in the evaluation process that sought to engage a large number of people have not been sustained, because the 'time and resources' inputted are not reflected in the outcomes for all involved. This suggests that the outcomes of community involvement processes were important in impacting upon later processes.

One particular method used for community involvement, namely the community researchers project, has been effective in terms of long-term sustainability. This project provided extensive training and work experience to eight members of the community "to get them up to speed as proper researchers and analysts". The trainees are now self-employed as 'community researchers' and receive commissions from the public, private and third sector to carry out community-led evaluation. This, along with NDC led capacity-building for local community and voluntary groups, has resulted in building up practices of evidence-based working amongst the local voluntary and community sector, which the respondent perceives to be positive in terms of creating a voluntary and community sector that is less "hand-to-mouth" and more financially sustainable due to their ability to access and fulfil the evaluation requirements of funding. Community researchers and capacity-building develops the expertise of the local community in evidence-based practice.

When asked about the barriers and drivers to community involvement in evaluation, the respondent indicated that the key driver was staff expertise and commitment. While the current government agenda has "married up to what we were trying to do here" and helped "bring people on board", it has not "shap[ed] our direction and our strategies". The respondent felt that "we don't need support in this area. We feel we're delivering and developing the best practice here". Though the respondent thought that staff expertise was the major driver for them, the respondent recognised

that a lack of “staff expertise and commitment” *could* be a barrier as community involvement in evaluation is “very time consuming, you have to have a lot of patience for it”. Resources, in terms of time and money for training could help to overcome this. The respondent acknowledged that ‘engagement fatigue’ and evaluation as a ‘specialist area’ that not everyone is interested in might limit community involvement in evaluation. However, the community was conceived of as neither a barrier nor a driver; rather “you just have to be realistic about what you can achieve”.

### 5.2.2. Respondent B

Respondent B was categorised as having a moderate approach to community involvement in evaluation. Project evaluation is understood as very important to the work of the NDC, and is tied closely to funding: “if you did not come up to scratch on the criteria we set you didn’t get your money”. In this sense, the NDC takes an evidence based approach to assure accountability, as “the integrity of the... NDC scheme is entirely dependent on the quality, accuracy and timeliness of the information provided” (Project Managers' Kit, p.26). However, there is also the recognition that the evidence-based approach is imperfect because data collection is often “messy... data doesn't stay still”, and that evidence is presented “in the best light”.

It became evident in the interview that the respondent takes a top-down approach to evaluation. The ‘framework’ for evaluation methodology remains largely unchanged and was established by the CLG guidance document *New Deal for Communities: Monitoring, Review and Evaluation*, and is influenced by the annual Performance Management Framework. The respondent also indicated that, because staff commitment to evaluation was not strong, as programme manager, some effort had been put in to ensure that evaluations were actually carried out: “It sounds very punitive, but unfortunately, unless you’re there and you are talking to people, the tendency is that that will slip”. Furthermore, community consultation is required; however, the community do not play a significant role in forming evaluation practices.

There has been little innovation in evaluation methodology as the approach to evaluation has not varied a great deal over the lifetime of the NDC: “the framework for evaluation has been set now. It’s not something that we’re going to go over and review”. However, the respondent indicated that there has been a degree of “professionalisation” and “sophistication” of staff capacity in terms of evaluation. The most significant change to the approach to evaluation has been a strengthening of emphasis on objectivity. The cause for this shift was a clientilistic local politics which was perceived to be limiting partnership working:

“we had quite strong, very self-centred community organisations...

So the process of the NDC was to try [to] move that kind of way of thinking and agenda into a much more collegial way... A part of that was the use of things like evaluation to act as very clear evidence of the added-value that can come through that kind of approach and to create a much stronger sense of community”

By implication, there has been a reduction in community involvement in evaluation processes. Evaluations are undertaken internally by NDC staff, or externally by consultants in order to be objective.

While there is an emphasis on capacity-building of local community and voluntary organisations that is similar to Respondent A, the key element of this capacity building is partnership working rather than project evaluation. Project evaluation here becomes a means for evidencing the value of partnership working: The NDC tried to create “alliances within the community sector so that the level of understanding and trust would build and that there would be a legacy of much stronger understanding”.

### 5.2.3. Respondent C

Respondent C was categorised as having a weak approach to community involvement in evaluation. Evaluation was ‘quite important’ to the overall work of the NDC. While ongoing monitoring was carried out - largely for the purpose of assessing whether the project should receive further funding - formal evaluations are rarely carried out (Evaluation Strategy, 2005: 4). The one instance where a formal evaluation has been carried out while the respondent has been employed at the NDC was to establish “why [the project] was working and what exactly was bringing about

this success". There is no requirement in the project application procedure for an outline evaluation procedure (ibid.: 1)

Community involvement in evaluation processes was 'quite unimportant', and community ownership of evaluation was 'very weak'. The respondent stressed the importance of ensuring that evaluations were representative, and that the community, as respondents to evaluation research, were given the opportunity to express their opinion: "We try very hard with the evaluation work that we do to make sure that we get a full picture... we try to get a full range in sampling... [and] we do try to get more than just data and stats". The respondent had presented the proposal for the aforementioned evaluation to the board for their comment, however they did not want to change any aspect of it, and were happy for the respondent to continue with the evaluation as it was proposed. The respondent stated that the board "have always been happy with the work that we've done". While aware of other NDCs that had developed more participatory approaches to evaluation, the respondent indicated that "as far as I'm aware there's been no history of it here, and so when I came in to be honest, I didn't really think that that was something to do".

During the interview the respondent questioned whether the NDC should do more to involve the community in evaluation processes: "I keep going back and forward about whether we should be doing this or not. Sometimes I think we should... because the whole point of the NDC is that its community lead... And sometimes I think we've probably done the right thing by doing what we've done. But I don't know". The suggestion that community involvement in evaluation should be increased is also made in the Evaluation Strategy (2005: 7-8). This follows the finding by Stuart Wilks-Heeg (2003) that, "there is advocacy of the use of community-led evaluation, but little or no notion as to how to take it forward" (p.213). The respondent was also concerned about asking too much of the community: "People in our area must sometimes get consultation fatigue... Our board are very busy people (sic)". This concern is pertinent in relation to the comment that "we would only do [community involvement] if there was community demand, but it is more than possible to argue that the NDC staff have done little to find that demand". In something of a self-reinforcing cycle, the respondent is concerned that the NDC is demanding too much



of the community while simultaneously not knowing what community demand there is for involvement.

In relation to the comment on demanding much from board members, the respondent described some training that the resident board members had received to enable them to fulfil their role more fully. However, the respondent suggested that this was also problematic as by “creating this training need to be able to be a member of that board... you are slicing a huge part of your local community by demanding a certain amount from your board members”. In general, there is a perceived lack of resources to develop the capacity for community involvement in evaluation: the NDC “does not have the capacity to always carry out fully collaborative evaluations... However, it is certainly possible to take the view that participation is a valuable attribute in evaluation and should be factored in” (Evaluation Strategy, 2005: 8).

### 5.3. Discussion

What then do these instances tell us about collaborative planning? I will first explain whether or not these instances can be described as collaborative planning, and then go on to examine the implications for the theory of collaborative planning focusing particularly on power and process.

#### 5.3.1. Collaborative Planning in Practice

In all cases, approaches to community involvement in evaluation processes cannot be described as collaborative planning. This follows the findings of Ralf Brand and Frank Gaffikin (2007) and supports the argument that “some planners are implementing more innovative forms of participation in local planning processes, but... these have not occurred within collaborative or communicative rationality frameworks” (Tewdwr-Jones & Allmedinger, 1998: 1987). While the most frequent indicators of why evaluation was carried out were to assess project impacts and to inform decision-making within the NDC - suggesting some sort of reflective practice *within* the NDC - the next two were accountability and value-for money which relate evaluation practices to top-down funding structures. While local knowledge was one form of information contributing to an evidence-base, the evaluation process itself

remained hinged to notions of expertise and objectivity, especially with regard to the role of the evaluator. Respondent A represents the closest fit to collaborative planning, where evaluation processes included a range of stakeholders in a discursive setting. The full impacts of this process upon both community involvement and evaluation practices have yet to be evaluated by the NDC, and certainly the case warrants further research. However, it can be said that, where individuals were most involved they were trained to become experts in the techniques of present evaluation processes. In this sense, community involvement has been internalised into the evidence-based approach.

### 5.3.2. Understanding Power

Despite the NDC's intention to institutionalise a bottom-up, community owned approach to regeneration, the extent to which this was implemented in evaluation practices has been limited. Findings from the interviews suggest two possible limitations of the institutionalist approach taken by collaborative planning. Firstly, the degree to which community involvement in evaluation was implemented depended in part on the "individual perception and motivation" (Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger, 1998: 1980) of staff. Such differences are evident in a comparison between respondents B and C. Respondent B perceived objectivity to be of central importance to evaluation processes, and thus did not perceive community involvement in evaluation to be viable. However, respondent C thought that community involvement in evaluation *should* happen and yet was unwilling to undertake such activities because of perceptions, supported or otherwise, about the community's willingness to be involved. Clearly the different perceptions about evaluation processes and the role that the community can play in this influenced the degree of community involvement in evaluation processes.

Secondly, and in relation to the first point, the top-down evidence-based approach seems to impact more greatly upon the practices of NDC staff than the community involvement agenda. All three interviewees indicated that they took an evidence-based approach to evaluation, and respondent B indicated that this approach was directly influenced by the Government's evaluation framework for regeneration. This suggests that individuals, while influencing evaluation processes through their

individual perceptions and motivations, are, simultaneously “subject to structuralist forces” (Rydin, 2003: 35) which potentially limit the nature of evaluation processes. Interestingly, while the survey showed that value for money and accountability were not the most important reasons for carrying out evaluation, the interviews highlighted that these reasons were perhaps more important than was first indicated. For respondent A, capacity building in terms of evaluation was seen as important for local organisations to be able to respond to funding opportunities in the future, while for respondent B and C current monitoring and evaluation procedures were tied to project funding.

The above point is particularly important in relation to the critique that Healey underplays the importance of the structural trend towards neo-liberalism. While collaborative planning is founded as an alternative to market-liberal approaches to policy-making, Healey’s critique of the market-liberal approach is based upon the way that this limits the ability of all stakeholders to express their values in the creation “of consensus... around what the problems are... [and] about strategies and directions” (p. 244). But, is it really the case that instrumental rationality has “made a significant detrimental difference to [people’s] ability to express [their] voice?” (MTJ, 1998: 1979). Particularly interesting here is the community researchers project described by respondent A. This project has given significant training to the community researchers, and by implication, increased the role of local knowledge in the evaluation processes. And yet, the process is fundamentally based in instrumental rationality, as the researchers are experts undertaking objective research. The critical factor in shaping this project was the need to build capacity of local organisations to fit within the existing framework of funding processes. While local knowledge is becoming increasingly important in evaluation, funding structures remain staunchly in power of how evaluations are carried out suggesting that local knowledge is “‘shoehorned’ on to local policy initiatives” (Imrie & Raco, 2003: 27).

### 5.3.3. Process and Outcomes

It may seem a rather obvious point to make, but the research shows that desired outcomes, whether procedural or substantive, clearly shape the processes implemented to achieve those outcomes, while procedures simultaneously shape both

procedural and substantive outcomes. So for instance, in the case of respondent A, while citizens' juries and other participative approaches to large-scale participatory approaches had been attempted, the outcomes of the process did not mirror the inputs and so other processes for community involvement were sought, leading to the adoption of the community researcher project. In the case of respondent B, while they had also attempted to involve the community earlier on in the NDC process, they had shifted the evaluation process to be undertaken by an impartial objective party. The procedure of community involvement in evaluation was not seen as appropriate due to "self-interest" and "local politics" impeding impartiality. Healey then is correct to argue that "substance and process are co-constituted, not separate spheres" (2003: 111) as the interviews highlight the complex relationship between process and outcomes. Past processes in community involvement and evaluation clearly impact upon both outcomes and considerations for future processes. This suggests that Healey is right to call for the establishment of an "ethics of conduct" (ibid.) for such processes, and is confirmed in the work of Dobbs and Moore (2002: 170).

## 6. Conclusions

Collaborative Planning is both a normative theory and methodology that seeks to create a “*shared power world*” (Healey, 2006: 5) through the institutionalisation of processes for discursive and reflective decision-making. However, the extent to which it fits with actual instances of community involvement in evaluation processes is limited, which in turn highlights the limitations of the theory itself in bringing about the change it seeks. Instances of community involvement in evaluation processes of NDCs understand community involvement as instrumental to complying with programme specific and more general regeneration funding frameworks. These top-down funding frameworks limit the extent to which innovative approaches to community involvement in evaluation processes can be tried, and also the extent to which evaluation processes can help to learn lessons about regeneration processes (Ho, 2003: 209).

While the NDC may represent the institutionalisation of community-led regeneration the degree to which this extends to evaluation practices is limited. It is important to recognise that there are some instances of ‘bottom-up’ community involvement in such evaluation processes. However, these have been brought about largely through the expertise of particular staff who are encouraged by community demand and government support. This suggests that while structural power plays an important role in shaping community involvement processes, there is room for individual innovation within these structures (Healey, 2003: 105). However, it may be the case that individual innovation may not be driven by the same values as those espoused by collaborative planning.

This research has highlighted that the relationship between processes and outcomes are complex; instances of community involvement are driven by certain desired outcomes, but may result in other outcomes that in turn impact upon processes. In such a situation it is agreed that “ethics of conduct” (ibid.: 111) ought to be established for community involvement in evaluation processes. However, such an ethics of conduct must recognise the wider evaluation framework in which community involvement occurs if it is to function. Processes for community involvement in evaluation come face-to-face with the top-down approach to

evaluation, and thus need to find ways to respond effectively. Collaborative planning, through its emphasis on local decision-making, and underestimation of structural power, does not offer a clear way in which such local-decision-making practices can seriously challenge the top-down characteristic of evaluation.

The growing recognition of the importance of community involvement in regeneration offers increasing opportunity for community involvement in evaluation processes. And there is some evidence to suggest that certain aspects of collaborative planning - in particular, the recognition of local knowledge and inclusion of a range of stakeholders – are being put into practice in evaluation processes. Such processes can help to bring to light important lessons about regeneration. However, ‘top-down’ structures limit the extent to which community involvement in evaluation can be carried out. Finding ways to change the top-down nature of evaluation processes so that they can accommodate bottom-up processes becomes imperative. It is also important to consider the funding frameworks for regeneration and explore ways in which these can be disentangled from evaluation processes so as to enable learning.

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## Appendix A

### QUESTIONNAIRE: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE LOCAL EVALUATION OF NDC PROJECTS



This questionnaire is conducted as part of an MSc dissertation being completed at the Bartlett School of Planning, University College London.

#### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

You are invited to participate in a study of community involvement in the evaluation process of NDC projects in London. I am surveying staff responsible for the evaluation of NDC projects at all NDC partnerships across London.

You will be asked to answer a series of questions related to the evaluation of your NDC **projects** and community involvement in this process. In particular I am seeking your opinion on how your work in the evaluation of local projects is carried out in practice.

The survey will take approximately fifteen minutes to complete. If you would like to provide more comments, or, take part in a more in depth interview following up on your response to the survey then please do not hesitate to contact me. Any other information provided will be kindly appreciated.

All answers will be kept strictly confidential. If you give your permission by completing this questionnaire, I plan to publish the results as part of my MSc thesis to be submitted to University College London. In any publication, information will be aggregated and anonymised in such a way that no respondents will be identifiable.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to e-mail me at [redacted] and I would be happy to answer them.

Thank you very much for your time and participation.

#### A note on definitions:

The “Community” includes individuals, groups, organisations and businesses. Within the area of an NDC partnership there is may be several different ‘communities’.

“Community Involvement” focuses on actual instances of involvement, whereas engagement, influence and empowerment focus upon the relationship between the range of actors involved. focuses here on involvement in the evaluation of NDC projects which may or may not be organised by the local NDC directly. Community Involvement includes both the involvement of NDC board members, and ‘the community’ more widely.

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Have you referred to any of the following documents in your evaluation work?

- ☐ “New Deal for Communities: Monitoring, Review and Evaluation”
- ☐ “New Deal for Communities: Race Equality Guidance”
- ☐ “Involving Communities in Urban and Rural Regeneration – a guide for practitioners”

How important is project evaluation to the overall work of your NDC partnership?

Very important	Quite important	No opinion	Quite unimportant	Very unimportant
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How important are the following reasons for evaluation of projects?

	Very important	Quite important	No opinion	Quite unimportant	Very unimportant
To fulfil mandatory requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To assess value for money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To assess project's impact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To assess project's processes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To inform decision-making within the partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To inform national policy-making	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To inform the local community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To ensure accountability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Are there other reasons for evaluation that are important? Please specify:

In what aspects of the evaluation of projects are the community involved?

	Resident Board Members	Other community
Deciding and setting priorities of evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Designing methods for monitoring and evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deciding what information should be collected	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Collecting Information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Respondents to research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Analysing information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Receivers of evaluation results	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community are not involved	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

How important is community involvement in the evaluation process?

- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Quite important
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Quite unimportant
- ☐ Very unimportant

What makes you think that? Please provide reasoning for your choice:

Please indicate how strongly the following describe the practice of your NDC partnership in general

	Very strong	Quite strong	Don't Know	Quite weak	Very weak
Community Ownership of regeneration process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fostering Diversity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encouraging Inclusivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encouraging interaction and discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Formal involvement of community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Informal involvement of community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consensus building	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Developing reflective capacity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strategic approach to community involvement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please indicate how strongly the following describe the evaluation of projects

	Very strong	Quite strong	Don't Know	Quite weak	Very weak
Community Ownership of regeneration process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fostering Diversity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encouraging Inclusivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encouraging interaction and discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Formal involvement of community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Informal involvement of community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consensus building	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Developing reflective capacity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strategic approach to community involvement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

From which of the following have you received support for your activities in involving the community evaluation of projects?

	Skills training	Resources	Advice	Other	No support
Department for Communities and Local Government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Government Office for London	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shared Intelligence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other NDC Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What, if any, are the key drivers to involve the community in evaluation?

	Strong influence	Some influence	Don't Know	Little influence	No influence
Government Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
NDC staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community demand to be involved	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide reasoning for your choice:

What, if any, are the barriers to involving the community in the evaluation process?

- ☐ National Policy
- ☐ Institutional
- ☐ Cultural
- ☐ Individual members of staff/community
- ☐ Resources
- ☐ No barriers
- ☐ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide reasoning for your choice:

In what way might these barriers be overcome?

Would you be willing to be interviewed in more depth to follow up on this survey?

Yes ☐ No ☐

While your response will be kept strictly confidential, for administrative reasons, please fill in your details below

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

NDC Partnership: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your time and for your participation. It would be of great assistance to my research if you attach any additional comments. If you would like to know more about this research please don't hesitate to contact me at [r.corbett@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:r.corbett@ucl.ac.uk).

Please send the completed survey to [REDACTED]  
If you are having technical problems and would like a hard copy of this survey then please email me.



## **Appendix B**

### **Interview Schedule**

Explanation of research rationale.

Explanation of interview format

How long have you worked for the NDC in your role? And in your current position?

Go over survey questions for further explanation of answers

1. Evaluation: Please tell me generally about the local project evaluation process.

- Has it changed?
- What kind of information do you collect?
- Is this different across different projects? If so why

2. Community involvement: Please tell me about your community involvement practices in general?

- What aspects of project delivery are the community involved in, and how?
- What are the benefits of community involvement?
- What has been the impact of community involvement?
- How have your opinions changed?

3. Community involvement in local project evaluation: Please describe an example of when you have involved the community in local project evaluation

- What do you think the impacts of this were?
- Did it change the way that you worked or thought about evaluation/community involvement?
- What were the barriers and drivers to this process.

Final question: Do you think community involvement in the evaluation should be included regeneration programmes in the future?

Any questions for the researcher?

**QUESTIONNAIRE:  
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE  
LOCAL EVALUATION OF NDC  
PROJECTS**



**UCL**

Have you referred to any of the following documents in your evaluation work?

- 7/10 "New Deal for Communities: Monitoring, Review and Evaluation"
- 3/10 "New Deal for Communities: Race Equality Guidance"
- 3/10 "Involving Communities in Urban and Rural Regeneration – a guide for practitioners"

How important is project evaluation to the overall work of your NDC partnership?

- 8/10 Very Important
- 2/10 Quite Important

How important are the following reasons for evaluation of projects?

	Very important	Quite important	No opinion	Quite unimportant	Very unimportant
To fulfil mandatory requirements	5	3	0	1	1
To assess value for money	6	3	0	0	0
To assess project's impact	9	1	0	0	0
To assess project's processes	5	5	0	0	0
To inform decision-making within the partnership	7	1	2	0	0
To inform national policy-making	3	3	2	2	0
To inform the local community	6	2	2	0	0
To ensure accountability	6	3	1	0	0

Are there other reasons for evaluation that are important? Please specify:

- "Measuring impact upon the key NDC target groups as specified in the delivery plan is essential"
- "For dissemination of information on best practice"
- "To understand and find ways to help sustain projects"
- "To justify a continuation of the same service"
- "To inform future delivery of the project concerned and wider programme"
- "To assess project's contribution to wider NDC strategic objectives"
- "To provide supporting/background information for the process"
- "Independent/expert view on specific outcomes"

In what aspects of the evaluation of projects are the community involved?

	Resident Board Members	Other community
Deciding and setting priorities of evaluation	8	3
Designing methods for monitoring and evaluation	4	4
Deciding what information should be collected	4	4
Collecting Information	0	7
Respondents to research	6	10
Analysing information	2	3
Receivers of evaluation results	10	3
Community are not involved	0	0

How important is community involvement in the evaluation process?

7/10      Very Important  
 2/10      Quite Important  
 1/10      Quite unimportant

What makes you think that? Please provide reasoning for your choice:

“Combining experienced officers with community evaluators as experts within the particular project allows more insightful exploration of projects”  
 “There has never been an appetite to do it here, and so we have not looked for it”  
 “Delivery plan and projects themselves require comment and consultation with NDC Board and various voluntary and statutory agencies”  
 “Vital in ensuring a thorough evaluation is completed”  
 “The community as a whole also need to have access to evidence as to value for money; in order for that evidence to be credible there has to be community involvement”  
 “As beneficiaries of services it is essential to get their feedback on the projects impact... [and] that evaluations are designed in a way that reflect their key issues when receiving services”  
 “Takes away some of the distance between researcher and researched community”  
 “Community can learn new skills / empowerment”  
 “Invaluable in offering a number of perspectives regarding evaluation”  
 “It is important to treat residents as equitable partners in the consultation process, so that their views are treated as equally valid as other stakeholder groups”

Please indicate how strongly the following describe the practice of your NDC partnership in general

	Very strong	Quite strong	Don't Know	Quite weak	Very weak
Community Ownership of regeneration process	5	4	1	0	0
Fostering Diversity	3	4	0	3	0
Encouraging Inclusivity	4	6	0	0	0
Encouraging interaction and discussion	3	6	1	0	0
Formal involvement of community	4	6	0	0	0
Informal involvement of community	5	3	2	0	0
Consensus building	3	5	1	1	0
Developing reflective capacity	2	4	2	2	0
Strategic approach to community involvement	2	5	1	2	0

Please indicate how strongly the following describe the evaluation of projects

	Very strong	Quite strong	Don't Know	Quite weak	Very weak
Community Ownership of regeneration process	4	3	1	0	1
Fostering Diversity	2	6	0	1	0
Encouraging Inclusivity	3	5	0	0	1
Encouraging interaction and discussion	2	7	0	0	0
Formal involvement of community	3	5	0	1	0
Informal involvement of community	4	4	1	0	0
Consensus building	3	6	0	0	0
Developing reflective capacity	3	3	3	0	0
Strategic approach to community involvement	4	4	1	0	0

From which of the following have you received support for your activities in involving the community evaluation of projects?

	Skills training	Resources	Advice	Other	No support
Department for Communities and Local Government	1	3	4	0	5
Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research	0	2	1	1	4
Government Office for London	1	3	5	0	3
Shared Intelligence	3	3	6	3	1
Other NDC Partnerships	1	5	7	3	1
Other (please specify)					
Local Authority		1	1		
National Centre for Social Research	1				

What, if any, are the key drivers to involve the community in evaluation?

	Strong influence	Some influence	Don't Know	Little influence	No influence
Government Policy	5	2	0	3	0
NDC staff	8	2	0	0	0
Community demand to be involved	8	2	0	0	0

Please provide reasoning for your choice

Government Policy:

- “NDCs were set up as community-led programmes and include performance measures around local involvement and feelings of influence in decision-making processes”
- “CLG programme part of a wider cross-government devolution and empowerment agenda”
- “Most government policy development to address needs of poor BME community”
- “Government policy acts as guidance”
- “Policy recognises and emphasises partnership”

NDC Staff:

- “Involving the community is something we HAVE to (the GOL would be critical if we did not); but it’s something we would do anyway”
- “Whilst Government policy does recommend community influence it has largely been down to NDC staff to ensure this occurs, as this is not policed by and of the Government Agencies”
- “NDC staff experienced community development practitioners and trained in participatory appraisal and embed this into their work”
- “Without NDC staffing resources delivery or a project and evaluation can not fully be achieved, as they have the knowledge and relationships needed”
- “Staff have to be willing to give away power about research / evaluation focus”

“NDC staff recognise an inclusive partnership led approach as being necessary in order to help sustain and generate an ownership of the future regeneration process... the knowledge of the staff act as [one of] the primary drivers”

“We don’t do it because central government tell us to do it we know it is a good and worthwhile exercise in the first place”

#### Community demand:

“Whilst NDC staff do strongly influence this process it is largely down to the community to want to be involved in any assessment of the projects. Similarly, for Resident Board members to champion community inclusion within evaluation”

“Programme built on strong community lead with strong community activists who are keen to be at the heart of evaluative processes”

“A number of project beneficiaries are very... enthusiastic in the completion of the evaluation”

“Our community would be up in arms if we did not!”

#### What, if any, are the barriers to involving the community in the evaluation process?

3/10	Institutional
4/10	Cultural
3/10	Individual members of staff/community
5/10	Resources
2/10	No barriers

#### Please provide reasoning for your choice:

##### Resources:

“Involving the community (in a non-tokenistic, meaningful manner) in evaluation is a highly resource intensive processes requiring additional time (staff and community), money (in terms of staff/consultant time and community member time – community members are paid for their evaluation work), and skills (which has time and money implications in terms of the training required to develop local community capacity)”

“The extent to which community involvement in evaluation has to be balanced with a need to deliver the programme within the time and budgets defined”

“Resources, because the evaluation function sits within a team that has a large number of competing priorities of time and money”

“Funding for additional evaluation activities is always difficult to secure”

“Sometimes Time and Money limit the numbers of community members that can be included within evaluations” “

##### Community willingness:

“Some residents that work may not have the time, and some will not have the inclination to get involved”

“Their willingness to volunteer into this process”

“It is our view, and this mainly comes through the Board, that the community is not interested in doing evaluation... There has never been an appetite to do it here, and so we have not looked for it”

##### Social Exclusion:

“Lack of confidence among BAME with English as a second language, and English with literacy problems... anything involving reading and writing, for example, is something they will avoid”

“Strong localised inequalities - huge polarisation mitigate against participation through residualisation process”

“Exclusion [which] is largely a result of political and institutional factors”

#### Historical contexts:

“We have never done it before, and so it is easier to not start”

“Bad experiences of consultation and engagement in the past often create a culture that avoids future engagement”

“The wider political infrastructure that exists beyond... the Local Authority, and other mainstream organisations who do not often engage with communities effectively and therefore our engagement is often about undoing past wrongs and regaining trust”

“If the community is ‘over-researched’ they are hardly willing to engage in additional activities”

#### In what way might these barriers be overcome?

##### Capacity Building:

“Staff can support community to learn how to evaluate and participate in evaluation successfully”

“Greater capacity building with respect to evaluation at start of programme or prior to programme beginning”

“By continuing existing work with community members and project beneficiaries”

“Continual capacity building and opportunities - continued engagement and outreach and exit for resident involvement”

##### Accessibility:

“We use translations and interpreters, do door-to-door surveying... What has proved most successful is inviting the leaders of community groups to bring their groups along to dedicated consultation sessions. The Bengali Women’s group for example bring along one of the husbands who is completely fluent in English; they enjoy the fact the session is dedicated to them and all come along; the same applies to our Turkish Ladies Group, although we have now rumbled them as they came to the Xmas party and we discovered several of them speak perfect English”

“Greater publicity and planning should remove barriers concerning community awareness of the evaluation and willingness to contribute”

“Developing a network of peer based champions and advocacy workers who can act as an intermediary between the NDC and the community. They provide a bridge between professionals and the community helping to break down imagined and perceived barriers that often don’t exist in the first place”

##### Incentives:

“Offer food, childcare and have the meetings at a reasonable time of the day for the resident”

##### Resources:

“Investment of resource is necessary to overcome this history of exclusion”

“More resources”

##### Resource management:

“Resource needs to be channelled in order to ensure that the process is about learning and capacity development rather than just a passive process of community validation”

“Set percentage of total funding reserved for evaluation and research – that down to the culture of the organisation”